



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Memphis District

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Corps of Engineers begins removing HESCO bastions at BP-NM Floodway

MEMPHIS, Tenn., May 10, 2012 – The Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today began removing the sand-filled HESCO bastions from the top of the levee in the upper crevasse at the Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway in preparation for this year’s construction season.

“This is the first critical step in the process of returning the frontline levee to its pre-flood level of protection,” Col. Vernie Reichling, the Corps’ Memphis District Commander said. “It will set the stage for contract work crews to begin widening and raising the levee to 55’.”

The Corps placed two miles of HESCO bastions – collapsible wire mesh containers with a heavy duty fabric liner – on the levee crown at the end of last year’s construction season to achieve an interim level of protection equivalent to 55’ on the Cairo gage. This was done as part of the orderly winter shutdown of construction work.

Once the bastions are removed the level of protection within the floodway will be temporarily reduced to an equivalent of 51’ on the Cairo gage.

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HESCO-2/2/2/2

The Mississippi River Commission approved the decision to begin removing the HESCO bastions in coordination with the National Weather Service. Forecasted weather patterns and the below normal river stages being experienced at the confluence significantly increases the confidence level that major flooding will not occur this spring in the confluence area. Additionally, Kentucky-Barkley reservoirs on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers are experiencing record low pools for this time of year and thus have a lot of reservoir storage.

Col. Reichling explained it is necessary to remove the bastions in order to allow further construction of the permanent levee embankment. Memphis District has received proposals from contractors for this levee construction work and is scheduled to make an award by the end of this month. Plans call for completion of the HESCO removal so as to not interfere with the contractor's work.

“The Corps’ goal remains to restore the floodway to its authorized elevation – equivalent to 62.5’ on the Cairo gage – this calendar year. However, this is dependent on the level of risk in the confluence area and updating the operation mechanism for the floodway.” Col. Reichling said.

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